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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S FORMER PROSECUTOR GENERAL
GURBANBIBI ATAJANOVA REPOREDLY ARRESTED FOLLOWING
RETIREMENT SHOW

REF: ASHGABAT 371

Sensitive but Unclassified - Please Protect Accordingly.

Reports of Atajanova's Arrest

¶1. (SBU) Former Prosecutor General Gurbanbibi Atajanova was arrested on April 11, according to the Gundogar opposition website and several embassy contacts. While unconfirmed, all reports, including from a GOTX security officer, say that Atajanova was detained at home the day after President Niyazov officially announced her "retirement" (reftel).

Prosecutor's House Cleaning Begins

¶2. (SBU) Possibly related to Atajanova's dismissal, Niyazov also fired prosecutors from the Ahal Welayat (province) and Ashgabat's Niyazov Etrap (district) on April 13, reportedly for "abusing" their official positions. Additionally, a contact told Pol Assistant that the Ministry of National Security began investigating five senior officers at the General Prosecutor's Office immediately following Atajanova's removal. A Gundogar source suggests that Atajanova's relatives will be next, as most of them, the source claims, were involved in her "criminal" activities.

Comment

¶3. (SBU) Atajanova's arrest is no surprise. Post likewise expected that at least one of Atajanova's former underlings at the General Prosecutor's Office would follow her into disgrace. More are likely to follow. After Niyazov fired oil and gas chief Gurbanmuradov and acting Central Bank chief Muhammedova, he reorganized the bureaucracies to make them more directly accountable to him. Both reorganizations have resulted in less productivity and less foreign investor confidence in Turkmenistan. If Niyazov follows this pattern and reorganizes the General Prosecutor's Office, it is likely he may attempt to subordinate the office to the security services, either to the Ministry of National Security or to the Presidential Apparat. In either case, whatever little rule of law that had previously existed will be further eroded. End Comment.

JACOBSON